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NEWS RELEASE

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Indiana's Green Industry Finds Opportunities in Costa Rica

SAN JOSE, COSTA RICA – Andy Miller, Director of the Indiana State Department of Agriculture, sees promising opportunities for the state's diverse agriculture industry. He is currently in Central America as part of Indiana's trade mission.

One area finding growth potential in Costa Rica is Indiana's ornamental plant industry. Rick Haggard, of Rail Trail Gardens in Zionsville, is representing the Indiana Green Industry Alliance on the trade mission. Wednesday he and other delegates visited CoopeIndia, an ornamental plant cooperative in Costa Rica, to learn more about the Clean Stock program.

Clean Stock is a cooperative program that uses integrated pest management to reduce pests on Costa Rica plant exports. The project involves USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service and Purdue University, as well as the Costa Rican Ministry of Agriculture, the National Production Council and the Tropical Agricultural Research and Higher Education Center. Dr. Cliff Sadoff of Purdue works with the program's partners.

Costa Rica is a world leader in ornamental plant exports and eliminating pests on those plants is a big concern. The program that Sadoff is working on will directly aid exports of ornamental plants from Costa Rica by reducing pests to protect U.S. agriculture.

Haggard is interested in Clean Stock because of the potential to benefit his customers. If the program proves successful in Costa Rica, larger plants can be exported to the United States, decreasing the handling time and costs to retail.

Because of the complementary varieties and growing seasons, Haggard sees benefits from trade in ornamental plants between Central America and Indiana. In Guatemala he found the nursery industry was diverse in the species they produced. In Costa Rica, he found the industry was more specialized. "The best ideas always come when you see someone else in the same industry doing the same thing in a different way," said Haggard.

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